Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future

Martin Löffelholz and David Weaver (Eds.)
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Löffelholz and Weaver's book *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future* is perhaps the first of its kind in journalism research to question the conservative approach practiced by a number of scholars in journalism research, which, they believe, should be carried out within their respective national paradigms. With the whole book revolving around this basic premise, the book is indeed a great effort on the part of the authors, who not only offer a comprehensive treatise of journalism research through an array of different approaches, methods, and paradigms followed around the globe but also successfully place the whole perspective in the context of an international situation. Divided into six parts, each part dedicated to a specific theme, the editors themselves contribute Part I: "Introduction to Journalism Research" and Part VI: "Conclusions." The remaining four parts are: Part II: "Theories of Journalism Research," Part III: "Methodology and Methods of Research," Part IV: "Selected Paradigms and Findings of Journalism Research," and Part V: "The Future of Journalism Research." On the whole the book consists of 22 invaluable contributions on journalism research.

In the introductory chapter, Löffelholz and Weaver set the tone for a call for global journalism research and a questioning of national, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries and they also logically articulate the reasons for such a call. While tracing the steps in journalism research to the early 1930s, the authors point out how early researchers such as Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Harold D. Lasswell, and Carl I. Hovland narrowly focused on media uses and effects on society without trying to know how society could have influenced journalism, journalists, and the news production process. Early research in journalism was mostly limited to studying the messages or content as given out in the media and was grounded mainly in descriptive and interpretive histories of journalism that examined the relationship between societal forces and journalistic institutions.

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With the exception of a few works like Leo Rosten's book *The Washington Correspondents* (1937), David Manning White's study on the "gatekeeper" (1950), and Warren Breed's study on social control in the newsroom (1955), not much research was conducted on journalists and the factors that influence their decisions in news production processes. In support of this, authors cite P. Shoemaker and S. Reese (1991, p. 5), who have argued that "most books on mass media research mainly cover studies dealing with the process through which the audience receives mass media content or with the effects of the content on people and society. We believe that it is equally important to understand the influences that shape content." Corresponding with these views, the authors argue that the attitudes of journalists do affect the kind of reporting they do, but more so at the organizational level than at the individual level. They also clearly put forward the mechanism by which organizational influences impact news content and coverage.

Tracing the early normative and individualistic descriptions of journalism, which even today continue in many countries around the globe, Löffelholz argues in chapter 2 that German sociologists Max Weber, Ferdinand Tonnies, and Robert E. Park should be considered predecessors of modern theoretical understandings of journalism, even though their influence on the development of journalism theories in other parts of the world has been quite limited. Narrating the sequence of events from normative individualistic journalism research to empiricism and middle-range theories of journalism research, Löffelholz credits Wilbur Schramm with first using the social sciences and empirical research to enhance journalism studies.

From this empirical analytical approach in journalism studies emerged the sociological theories of action developed by sociologists such as Weber, Alfred Schultz, and Thomas Luckmann. The journalism research based on these theories primarily focused on a typology of journalistic action forms, patterns, and rules. The distinction between journalists as persons and journalism as a social system raised a number of new questions, such as: Is journalism a functional system *within* society, as Manfred Rühl (1980) assumes, or does it operate as a subsystem within a larger functional system such as "public" or "mass media"? Such questions not only led to a refinement of the systems theoretical approach but also resulted in an opening up of new social integration theories such as Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model.

While dwelling on the societal approaches theory or societal systems theories, Rühl effectively points out in chapter 3 some of the important missing points in globalized journalism research. His elaboration of Niklas Luhmann's communication system theory in relation to Parsonian world societal action system theory is quite impressive. The way Luhmann assumed that the complexity of the world society is reduced by the social system was central to describing journalism as a system rather than as a subsystem of media.

In chapters 4 and 5, Hartley and Altmeppen offer deep insights into the working definitions of their domains of research that are not only refreshing but also thought provoking. Altmeppen offers an impressive array of methods using survey methods and questionnaires as tools of research. He proposes the triangulation method—in-depth interviews, case studies, and observations—as an effective measure of conducting qualitative and semi-quantitative analyses, which offer both reliability and validity to the organizational approach to journalism research.

While highlighting the missing links concerning the news decisions of journalists, Donsbach proposes in chapter 6 to take advantage of psychology, particularly of cognitive psychology. He hypothesizes that two general needs or "functions" involving specific psychological processes can explain news decisions: a need for social validation of perceptions and a need to preserve one's existing predispositions. According to Donsbach, one is related to the social nature of journalists and the other relates to individual recognition, though both are intertwined. This has led to an extension of the "social comparison theory" of Leon Festinger (1954) to shared reality, in which C. D. Hardin and E. T. Higgins (1996) combine the theory of symbolic interaction with empirical evidence on the communication process. This assumes that even basic cognitive processes are defined by the social activities in which they are manifested. Another dimension to the decision-making process in media institutions is the gender and cultural approach. In chapter 7, Robinson analyzes some of the systemic biases inherent in the social reproduction of the journalistic profession in North America and Europe.

In chapter 8, Hanitzsch poses the question, "What is comparative research and how relevant is it for journalism research?" He offers the discourse and methods of research by which one can determine the compatibility of cultures on which one would like to pursue comparative research, and he also provides a short guide to systematic comparative research. Weaver deliberates in chapter 9 on the strengths and weaknesses of survey methods and offers numerous insights as to how to proceed with this particular approach. Kolmer in a discussion of the content analysis approach in chapter 10 and Quandt in an outline of the observation method in chapter 11 present some new and refreshing ideas on these much-debated subjects around the globe. Part IV (chapters 12–17) offers a range of case studies that address the current status of research in the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, China, South Africa, and Mexico. Although these articles do not make any major theoretical advances, the reviews of the status of research in a range of countries are themselves very informative.

To sum up, with its heterogeneous approach to global journalism research, Löffelholz and Weaver's book discusses a range of issues starting from normative theories through to middle-range theories and on to the integrative systems approach. A range of subjects is discussed from diverse angles. The book is well

grounded both in historiography and discursive analysis besides empiricism, which makes it quite unique and different from other books on research methodology. Most research methodology books are traditional in their presentation of content and follow a conventional approach to journalism research. They often do not offer a systematic and connecting story of evolutionary developments in the different phases of research in journalism. In addition to the lucid presentations of the editors themselves, the contributions from the other authors are highly impressive and offer a deep, systematic and scientific rationale for extending research in journalism beyond narrow and national paradigms. The book is therefore a must-read for every academic and media practitioner, as well as being a valuable addition to every media institution offering research and academic programs.

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